

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 413

INFO AMCONSUL IBADAN

AMCONSUL KADUNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 7207

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, NI

SUBJ: BIO OF COLONEL GARBA

1. FOLLOWING IS UPDATED BIO INFORMATION ON COLONEL JOSEPH NANVEN GARBA, COMMANDER OF BRIGADE OF GUARDS WHO TODAY ANNOUNCED REMOVAL OF GENERAL GOWON AS HEAD OF STATE.
2. GARBA HAS BEEN WITH BRIGADE OF GUARDS FOR MUCH OF PAST TEN YEARS, OBVIOUSLY ENJOYING HEAD OF STATE'S CONFIDENCE. GENERALLY REGARDED OF AVERAGE INTELLIGENCE, NOT RPT NOT A DEEP THINKER GARBA HAS A LARGE EGO TO THE POINT WHERE SOME SEE IRRATIONAL STREAKS IN HIS CHARACTER. ONE HE MAKES UP HIS MIND ABOUT SOMETHING, HE IS LIKELY TO STICK WITH HIS VIEWPOINT REGARDLESS OF LOGIC OR FACTS.
3. ONE OF GARBA'S PASSIONS IS BASKETBALL. HE IS SECRETARY OF THE NIGERIAN AMATURE BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION AND PLAYS FOR THE FLYING STARS OF NIGERIA. EMBOFF WHO ALSO PLAYS FOR TEAM COMPARES PLAYING BASKETBALL WITH HIM TO PLAYING WITH FIDEL CASTRO - ALL PLAY IS TO REVOLVE AROUND HIM AND THE REFEREES AND THE NIGERIAN PLAYERS ARE TERRIFIED OF DOING SOMETHING TO DISPLEASE HIM, GOING ALONG WITH HIS DECISIONS NO MATTER HOW LUDICROUS.

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4. OBSERVERS HAVE NOT RPT NOT SENSED IN GARBA THE QUALITIES OF A COUP LEADER. SPECULATION IS THAT HE IS A FIGUREHEAD CHOSEN MOSTLY FOR HIS POSITION WITH GOWON AND THE BRIGADE OF GUARDS. THERE ARE EVEN RUMORS THAT GARBA COERCED INTO MAKING ANNOUNCEMENT.

5. BRITISH SOURCES INDICATES GARBA WELL-DISPOSED TOWARDS UK AND BY INFERENCE TOWARDS WEST IN GENERAL. GARBA AVOIDS SOCIAL CONTACT WITH AMERICANS WHEN POSSIBLE, BUT HE SELDOM ATTENDS FUNCTIONS OF ANY KIND, SO THIS DOES NOT NECESSARILY INDICATE NEGATIVE FEELINGS TOWARDS U.S.

6. BORN JULY 17, 1943 IN LANGTANG, BENUE PLATEAU STATE, GARBA IS MEMBER OF TIV TRIBE. A DEVOUT CATHOLIC, HE IS ON EASY TERMS WITH ARCHBISHOP OF LAGOS AND APOSTOLIC DELEGATE TO NIGERIA.
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